For the love of music and travel

While most students pack up and go home for the holidays such as Christmas and Easter, the Jesus College Choir (JCC) Cambridge plans to tour Sri Lanka. Known for their in-depth renditions of classic tunes, both secular and spiritual, the choir is currently warming up for a tour of Sri Lanka this month.

It was when Professor Manored Stansfield set out on one of the choir’s many public performances in Cambridge that the idea of a visit took shape. Encouraged by the choir’s enthusiasm when they visited India last year, the Professor who is now President of the Jesus College Choir (JCC) Tour Fund in Sri Lanka for this year, says group ground work started just a few months ago.

Director of the JCC, Mark Williams says since the choir were left free of their usual obligations, they have a lot of extra time and liberty. “They have spent a good deal of time on the internet researching destinations and are particularly excited to stop by at Galle and the Elephant Orphanage at Pinawela. In all honesty however he says, “I think they are delighted to be travelling somewhere warm,” given the current weather in England.

Mr. Williams was the Assistant Organist at the St. Paul’s Cathedral in London and Director of Music at the St. Paul’s Cathedral School at just 21 in 2000. Taking over as choir director of the JCC in 2000 he knew the choir was eager not only to tour the country but to share their music.

“They have a packed schedule here,” according to the Secretary of the JCC Tour Fund for the Sri Lanka Tour, Piyuma de Liurana. “Not just sightseeing, the choir intends to hold workshops in schools around the country. Starting off in Colombo they will be singing at services with school choirs in Colombo, Kandy and even Jaffna. The main events however are to be a concert on December 10 at the Leлизol College Hall.

Singing various modes of interesting songs from natural sciences and language to engineering, Mr. Williams says the common denominator among the students is the love for music and travelling. Grateful that France, RSA, Ukraine and Ireland are some of the places the choir made a stop at are memories from each of those destinations still live on. Whichever visit a country, we take away something from the country” and he believes different the Sri Lankan experience wouldn’t be so different. “As the choir was extremely excited when the tour was first proposed” There were a few natural hurdles such as travel in terms of safety and health however he feels these have been eased by the meticulous planning of the organizing committee in Sri Lanka. The Director feels the trip will be yet another rewarding experience.

A group of students who balance studying and their involvement in the JCC which includes time for little else, Professor Manored knows the strain it could be. If one didn’t enjoy the experiences. They go through competitive auditions to get in and once they do make it, the stress their practical schedule is hectic to say the least. The Director too admits that the choir has been rather busy as of late. Apart from the regular services that the choir sings for in their chapel he says the choir has recently appeared in The Royal Albert Hall, Ely Cathedral and the King’s College Chapel. Having just a few weeks to catch up on a hectic schedule leaving much of the practicing for their appearances in Sri Lanka, further they yet have. Unfazed by the hectic schedule, he says, "Hopefully the choir is going to learn more and enjoy the challenge of learning a new repertoire and performing it in new venues."

The JCC will be performing a repertoire of some common and lesser known. before members. "There should be something for everyone," Mark promises. The December 10th. building on from seasonal members like "Deck the Halls" to "Jingle Bells", the choir also hopes to "sing out and around the Christmas season with some slightly more reflective numbers (including "Ellen Hooke’s Jesus Christ The Apple Tree" and "A Spacious Roof") by Herbert Howells."

Tickets for the concert at Rs. 500, 1000, 2000 and 3000 for reserved seats along with balcony seats at Rs. 500 can be purchased at Odissi.