

# Man behind high profile choir

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**PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT:** Gan and Dr Siti Hasmah hit the keys to get the perfect note. — STARpix by KEVIN TAN

AS music conductor, instructor and arranger for the Bakti (Association of Wives of Ministers and Deputy Ministers) choir, James Gan Hee Jeng, 42, cannot help feeling a bit anxious at times.

He knows he will also come under the spotlight when this high-profile choir goes on stage, but even so he is determined to go ahead mainly because he feels honoured at being given such an important task. And he also likes the Bakti members, whom he describes as very humble, cooperative and willing to learn.

The eldest child and only son of a school-teacher in Klang, Gan was 10 when he went along with his two sisters to their ballet classes.

"I stood beside the pianist, Miss Chia, who played the accompaniment music for the ballet," he relates.

"My father did ask me to take up ballet but ballet for boys was something unheard of those days."

Gan ended up choosing to play the piano instead, with Miss Chia as his teacher.

His father, a teacher at the SJK (C) Pin Hwa in Klang, also received permission from his headmaster to allow Gan to use the piano in the school hall after school closed. He bought his son a piano five years after his first music lesson. As for what it takes to make good music, Gan says: "Proper guidance, patience and regular practice."

"It is always better to do well in a simple piece rather than struggle to do a complicated one," says Gan who also plays the keyboard, organ and trumpet. — **BY FOONG PEK YEE**