



PEEWEE AND COUSINS: (from left to right) Lita deGuzman, Lily Laue, Peewee, Mimi Scherer, Minnie Valentin, Raquel Fok, Aida McCann. **LITTLE GIRL:** Angela McCann

by MITOS VILLASENOR

FREEHOLD, NJ - It was a perfect complement to a glorious Sunday afternoon in May - a piano concert by Virginia ("Peewee") Laico

work for Immigrations). They welcomed Rory from California, Nini from Washington, Nonon from Illinois and Mito and cousins Lita and Minnie Valentin from New Jersey. Some cousins had not seen

some keys, and her short legs dangling miles away from the floor and piano pedals. Then, at thirteen, she won her first piano competition. I remember how small she looked playing on a grand piano, accompanied by a whole orchestra on a huge stage. From there, it was on to graduating with honors at the Chicago Conservatory, more training at the Peabody Conservatory and concert tours in the States. She returned to Manila as a music professor and started composing. She won first prize at the Cultural Center of the Philippines Song Cycle Composition Contest.

Through all those years, she continued to perform at various concerts, always focused on her career.

Now here she was - my sister - playing more masterfully than I

After flying from Manila to Washington DC, **PEEWEE PLAYS THE HIGH NOTES** ... and reunites Laicos with lost East Coast cousins!

Villanueva. It was also a major Laico moment with a lot of Laicos there to enjoy it. Peewee and her colleague, Linda Pio Roda, did the two-piano concert in Towson University, Maryland, as part of the Centennial Celebration of Philippine Independence organized by the Maryland Filipino community.

If Peewee came all the way from Manila to give a concert, her *raharah* sisters and cousins could not be far behind. Besides, it was a great occasion to have a reunion with the Laico-Washington DC connection, the Kabigtings. The Kabigting sisters - Lily, Raquel, Mimi, and Aida - whose mom, Tia Lydia, was Lolo Jim's sister, all have government-related jobs around DC (sorry, but none of them

each other for ten years.

Lily Laue organized a get-together while Mimi and Terry Scherer graciously offered their home. The noisy talking, laughing and eating began. There were so many *kuwentos* to remember, so many pictures to take. It was enough to make the neglected husbands and sons distance themselves safely from all the deafening yak-yak-yak as they patiently wondered, "*When will it end?*"

By Sunday, everyone was ready to behave and be cultured. As Peewee played *Philippine Postcards* - a medley of Philippine love songs and folk tunes which she arranged - I couldn't help seeing her again as a five year old, playing without any music lessons, stretching her tiny fingers as she could hardly reach

could remember. Peewee's years of concertizing showed in her confidence and command of the piano as she played Mozart, Barber and Rachmaninoff. I was beaming with pride. How could those small hands produce such powerful music? How could I have such a talented sister when I could only play *Chopsticks*? How could anyone get bored with Peewee's playing especially when she's wearing such a stunning fuschia kimona skirt? Wonder where she got that lovely skirt - it even looks hand-painted. Wait a minute, that was one of Lola Luz' designer gowns! I couldn't help smiling. I could imagine how proud Lola Luz and Lolo Jim would have been to see how Peewee - and Lola's gown - have come a long way. **LL**