

Welcome to TimesPeople  
What's this?

TimesPeople Lets You Share and Discover the Best of NY...

0:20 AM

Get Started No, thanks

HOME PAGE TODAY'S PAPER VIDEO MOST POPULAR TIMES TOPICS

Try Electronic Edition Log In Register Now

The New York Times

# Dance

Search All NYTimes.com

Go

WORLD U.S. N.Y. / REGION BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY SCIENCE HEALTH SPORTS OPINION ARTS STYLE TRAVEL JOBS REAL ESTATE AUTOS

ART & DESIGN BOOKS **DANCE** MOVIES MUSIC TELEVISION THEATER



**NEW YORK CITY BALLET**

**ROMEO + JULIET**

5 Performances Only  
May 15 – May 21

[CLICK HERE to BUY TICKETS NOW](#)

[Advertise on NYTimes.com](#)

## DANCE A Choreographer’s Twin Engines



Thomas Kirchgraber

Jiri Bubenicek, left, with his twin, Otto, performing in Claude Brumachon’s “Indomptés” at the National Theater in Prague.

By ROSLYN SULCAS  
Published: May 1, 2009

WHEN it comes to ballet choreographers, the United States and Europe sometimes feel as if they were separated by more than an ocean; substantial numbers of dance-makers who are well known Over There have hardly been seen Here. But occasionally the positions reverse, as they might just do for Jiri Bubenicek, a Czech choreographer whose new work for the [New York City Ballet](#) opens at the company’s spring gala on May 13.

[Enlarge This Image](#)



Paul Kolnik

Jiri Bubenicek in rehearsal at New York City Ballet for his coming work, “Toccata.”

Mr. Bubenicek has made a number of ballets since his first, in 1999, but he isn’t especially well known as a choreographer outside his native Prague. He has, however, achieved a reputation as a superb classical dancer, first with the Hamburg Ballet, and then at the Dresden SemperOper, where he is currently a principal.

That reputation has been magnified by another circumstance: Mr. Bubenicek, 35, has an identical twin, Otto, an equally admired principal with the Hamburg Ballet, who — in an admirable display of twin-appropriate synergy — frequently composes music for his brother’s pieces, as he has for the City

[Next Article in Arts \(10 of 24\) »](#)

### @Times - Inside NYTimes.com by E-Mail



Sign up for regular updates on what's new on NYTimes.com.

Sign Up

[See Sample](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)



**ROMEO + JULIET**

5 Performances Only  
May 15 – May 21

[CLICK HERE to BUY TICKETS NOW](#)

**NEWYORKCITYBALLET**

[Advertise on NYTimes.com](#)

### MOST POPULAR

E-MAILED BLOGGED SEARCHED

1. [Going Dutch](#)
2. [David Brooks: Genius: The Modern View](#)
3. [Maureen Dowd: How Character Corrodes](#)
4. [How Lehman Brothers Got Its Real Estate Fix](#)
5. [Frank Rich: Enough With the 100 Days Already](#)
6. [36 Hours in Oakland, Calif.](#)
7. [As a Professor, Obama Held Pragmatic Views on Court](#)
8. [Community Colleges Challenge Hierarchy With 4-Year Degrees](#)
9. [Personal Health: Paying a Price for Loving Red Meat](#)
10. [After the Great Recession](#)

[Go to Complete List »](#)

The New York Times

MOVIES

[nytimes.com/movies](#)

synergy — frequently composes music for his brother’s pieces, as he has for the City Ballet piece, “Toccata.”

And, it must immediately be noted, it’s not every pair of darkly handsome virtuoso dancer identical twins who come from a family of acrobats.

More on that later.

Mr. Bubenicek came to the notice of [Peter Martins](#), City Ballet’s ballet master in chief, through his participation, in October 2007, in the New York City Ballet’s choreographic institute, a twice-yearly workshop that offers select choreographers the chance to practice their craft with students from the [School of American Ballet](#) or company members. After Mr. Bubenicek showed his work at the end-of-session presentation, Mr. Martins immediately asked him to extend the piece for the company.

“There was something that rang true in the work,” Mr. Martins said. “He created images and moments that stopped me. I had a visceral instinct that here was a choreographer with real potential.”

Mr. Bubenicek smiled as he told the story in the Rose Building cafeteria after a rehearsal in early April. “I called my mother and brother right then and woke them up,” he said. But he was mostly serious while talking, with some reticence, about himself and his career.

He is more ebullient in rehearsal, where he clearly displays his gifts as a dancer, moving with highly coordinated whipping arms and legs and soft, plush jumps, demonstrating movement with accompanying exhalations to indicate the way he wants currents of energy to surge and abate.

“When you watch Jiri dance, it’s just amazing,” said David Protas, a corps de ballet dancer who worked with Mr. Bubenicek at the choreographic institute and is part of the seven-person cast of “Toccata.” “He really shows us what it should look like: the dynamic and the weight he wants. His work is very circular; there are no real hard edges. Each step folds into the next, it’s very organic and grounded, very different to what we usually do.”

Since he first started choreographing (“I had some free time,” he replied laconically when asked what had initially impelled him), Mr. Bubenicek has made abstract, plotless pieces using a wide range of music, from Pachelbel and Bach to his brother’s compositions. Oddly, given his purely ballet background, he has never until now made a piece on point.

“I don’t know why,” he said. “I think perhaps I am more contemporary at heart, although I do want to make ballets, even story ballets. But this is the company of Balanchine; the girls have perfect technique. It’s a gift — why not try it?”

Mr. Bubenicek is no slouch in the classical technique department himself. He and his brother trained from the age of 10 at the Prague Conservatory, and both won prizes at the Prix de Lausanne at 18 before joining the Hamburg Ballet in 1993. By 1995 they were soloists; by 1997 principals.

“My grandmother, mother, father, uncle and aunt were all acrobats” performing in circuses, Mr. Bubenicek said. “We always thought we’d follow in their footsteps. But a teacher from the conservatory saw us rehearsing in a studio with our father, and she told him we should do ballet. It was hard to be at the conservatory, because we were used to traveling. But we liked it right away.”

Mr. Bubenicek was matter-of-fact about his early circus upbringing. (There is some charming footage on YouTube, from the German documentary “Ballet Twins,” that shows the children in the circus environment.) It seems clear that the early exposure to performance, music and movement has given both men a notable creative confidence.

“It was such a free life; we saw every show and loved seeing our parents perform,” said



## Tribeca moments

Also in Movies:

[Interactive: inside Tribeca](#)

[Video: tribute to Tom Hanks](#)

[Complete coverage of the Tribeca Film Festival](#)

ADVERTISEMENTS



Ads by Google

what's this?

### Philips Healthcare

Laden Sie exklusiv White Papers zur Zukunft von Healthcare herunter!

[www.philips.com/because](http://www.philips.com/because)

Otto Bubenicek, speaking on the telephone from Hamburg. “We learned whatever you do, you do full out.”

Piano was compulsory at the Prague Conservatory, and Otto Bubenicek said that he had always liked composing. But he began in earnest only during his early years in Hamburg, after his brother bought an electronic keyboard and installed it in their shared apartment.

His private enjoyment of composition became more public when his brother asked him to create a score for “Unreachable Places,” made in 2005 for the Hamburg Ballet. “Toccata,” which has a score for two pianos, one viola and one cello, will be his sixth work for his brother, and the first time that his music will be played live.

“When I compose, I don’t have to play very well because the computer can do it for me,” Otto Bubenicek said. “I didn’t even know if it was possible to play it live or how many instruments we would need.”

In a startling show of Renaissance-man capability, Otto Bubenicek has also designed the costumes, something he has done only once before, for a work his brother made for the Zurich Ballet.

“In Communist times, there wasn’t the possibility to buy stuff, you had to make it,” he said. “That’s somehow still in our blood, like the circus. Whatever you experience when you are small, it makes you somehow stronger for the rest of your life.”

A version of this article appeared in print on May 3, 2009, on page AR19 of the New York edition.

[Next Article in Arts \(10 of 24\) »](#)

[Read the complete New York Times Electronic Edition on computer, just as it appears in print.](#)

Ads by Google

[what's this?](#)

[Tanzforum München](#)

Ballett - Steptanz - Jazz Von Anfänger bis Profi  
[www.tanzforum-muenchen.de](http://www.tanzforum-muenchen.de)

[Ballet Music-The Talisman](#)

Paquita-Esmeralda-Le Corsaire etc. ballet class & ballet recital music  
[www.classicalballetmusic.com](http://www.classicalballetmusic.com)

[Boutique hotels Prague](#)

Unique experience hotels on Prague Royal Route enjoy Special Offer now  
[www.hidden-places.com](http://www.hidden-places.com)

**Related Searches**

[Dancing](#)

[Get E-Mail Alerts](#)

[Martins, Peter](#)

[Get E-Mail Alerts](#)

INSIDE NYTIMES.COM

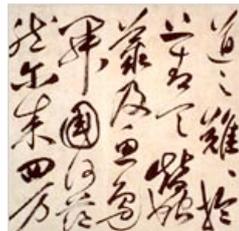


THE CITY »



[Fame on the Half Shell for Ex-Stars of 'Top Chef'](#)

OPINION »



[The Chinese Language, Ever Evolving](#)

TRAVEL »



[Europe on Two Borrowed Wheels](#)

OPINION »



[Op-Chart: Brief History of American Epidemics](#)

FASHION & STYLE »

[Social Q's: Do-Not-Call List](#)  
Answers to readers' questions about a boss who shares too much.

MUSIC »



[The Morning After 'American Idiot'](#)