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DANCE:

JOELLE BALLONZOLI'S WORK AT SCHONBERG

By Jennifer Dunning
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JOELLE BALLONZOLI is a French performer who has been working in New York for the last five years in the performance art, the theatrical form that mixes movement, speech and visual material. Presented Friday at the Bessie Sch"onberg Theater, her new "Performance Historique: A Good Recipe to End on the Moon" combined familiar elements of performance art with native wit and a tough and sultry personal presence. The result was an unusually well-integrated, hourlong collage that depicted the surrealistic excesses that war and militarism can encourage in the most ordinary of populations.

Connecting her dozen or so short solos are Miss Ballonzoli's "experimental tall tales," as she calls them - little stories that are, at their best, as ludicrous as they are believable and as funny as they are horrifying. She begins by referring to occupied France during World War II in a tale about a socialist plan to provide Frenchmen with bicycles on which to peddle to the beach. Being fair- skinned and subject to sunburn, the Germans stay away from those beaches, giving the French a false sense of security that costs them the war.

By the end of the evening, Miss Ballonzoli has darted 40 years ahead to a "nuclear tournament," giving instructions via radio station "WCBSuicide" to those evacuating, like Noah's animals, to the moon. Two tales stand out. One, a standoff between a pragmatic French concentration camp guard trying, with increasing exasperation and fear, to get his dying charges to learn the Nazi salute in time for a pending visit from Hitler. The other is a confrontation between two Bowery bums, both war veterans, that is chilling in its plausibility.

Miss Ballonzoli slouches and staggers, muscles taut, through spiraling stops and starts, and a few simple, witty props also help her to make her points. Her off-stage assistants included Lenny Mancini, Bronwyn Rucker, Anthony Coleman and Jean- Jacques Ferron.