

## VOICE

**Dan Hurlin cranks up** the cynicism so gradually in his cunning adaptation of Nathanael West's *A Cool Million* (Dance Theater Workshop) that the story's lesson about the fine line between the American entrepreneurial ideal and unabashed fascism creeps up like interest rates: The outcome is alarming even though you know what to expect. Acting out some 50 parts, Hurlin begins with a charming, cartoonish style, changing from hero to mustachioed villain as he takes his bow tie from his neck and perches it on his upper lip. But the playful, puppetry use of objects—a feather is an Indian chief, an American flag on a toothpick is a rising demagogue—turns sinister as our naïve hero, setting out to seek his fortune, loses his teeth, an eye, a hand, a foot, his scalp, and finally, his life. Hurlin matches the metonymic magic with skillful, evocative movement. He jabs and jerks, belts and bounces back as two men brawling; he tiptoes on invisible high heels as a hometown girl turned whore. West's novella may be a savage inversion of the Horatio Alger myth, but Hurlin's virtuosity is an argument for the power of individualism.

—Alisa Solomon