



[The Beanfield](#) at [HOME](#)

Presented by Breach Theatre

Reviewed by [Stephen Bowler](#) March 2016

Six young people plan to re-enact the Battle of the Beanfield, when hundreds of new age travellers were ambushed by police near Stonehenge in 1985. The six are tenacious pranksters with an eye for the absurd. They thresh the corny clichés of hippy chic and mill the monstrous wrongs of police brutality as they plough the symbolic field of battle.

Their analysis shuttles back and forth in time and technique, being partly an attempt to re-enact the bust-up and partly a series of interviews with folk who were there. But mainly the tale is in the telling as it zeros in on passions unleashed in the ecstasy of battle.

The 'awful hippy bullshit' of new age gatherings is as comic as the evasive dissembling of English Heritage and other landowners. The massive police presence, in the context of the ongoing Miners Strike, is no less ludicrous but has bloodier consequences, prompting a more physical style and climaxing in a powerful scene suggesting a Dionysian revel uniting apparent opposites.



A mindless brutality on the part of PC Plod blurs into a mindless, hallucinatory, crusty hangover as the sunrise signals a solstice that is itself entirely mindless. Mysterious chthonic forces crystallise on the field of battle that is also the realm of desire, revealing and expending its dark energies until exhaustion returns it to 'the still point' as T.S. Eliot once put it, the point without which there 'would be no dance'.

This is a swift-flowing, bright, funny, energetic piece. In around fifty minutes the pace never flags and the six young men and women are all highly watchable. The script is as witty as it is bold, especially in its willingness to go for Eleusinian gold in the final straight. What more can one ask of modern theatre?