

# Arnold Wesker's Centre 42

## Origin

At a Trades Union Congress on the Isle of Man in September, 1960, The Association of Cine and Television Technicians put forward a resolution which was passed at the Congress as **Resolution 42**. It read as follows:

"Congress recognises the importance of the arts in the life of the community especially now when many unions are securing a shorter working week and greater leisure for their members. It notes that the trade union movement has participated only to a small extent in the direct promotion of plays, films, music, literature and other forms of expression including those of value to its beliefs and principles. Congress considers that much more could be done and accordingly requests the General Council to conduct a special examination and to make proposals to a future Congress to ensure a greater participation by the trade union movement in all cultural activities."

*Chicken Soup with Barley*, the first in a trilogy that includes *Roots* and *I'm Talking about Jerusalem* was first performed at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry in 1958, and transferred to the Royal Court in the same year.

The full trilogy was performed at the Royal Court in 1960.



2011 *Chicken Soup with Barley's* production  
at the Royal Court Theatre





Tower Hamlets Environment Trust

**THE BATTLE OF  
CABLE STREET**

**The people of East London  
rallied to Cable Street on the  
4th October 1936 and forced back  
the march of the fascist  
Oswald Mosley and his Blackshirts  
through the streets of  
the East End.**

**"THEY SHALL NOT PASS"**



SARAH.

All right then! Nothing, then! It all comes down to nothing! People come and people go, wars destroy, accidents kill and plagues starve - it's all nothing then! Philosophy? You want philosophy? Nothing means anything! There! Philosophy! I know! So? Nothing! Despair - die then! Will that be achievement? To die? (*Softly.*) You don't want to do that Ronnie. So what if it all means nothing? When you know *that* you can start again. Please, Ronnie, don't let me finish this life thinking I lived for nothing. We got through, didn't we? We got scars but we got through. You hear me, Ronnie? (*She clasps him and moans.*) You've got to care, you've got to care, or you'll die.

[*Chicken Soup with Barley*, Act 3, scene 2, p. 78]

MRS BRYANT.

'My dear Beatie. It wouldn't really work, would it? My ideas about handing on a new kind of life are quite useless and romantic if I'm really honest. If I were a healthy human being it might have been all right but most of us intellectuals are pretty sick and neurotic - as you have often observed - and we couldn't build a world even if we were given the reins of government - not yet any-rate. I don't blame you for being stubborn, I don't blame you for ignoring every suggestion I ever made - I only blame myself for encouraging you to believe we could make a go of it . . .'

BEATIE.

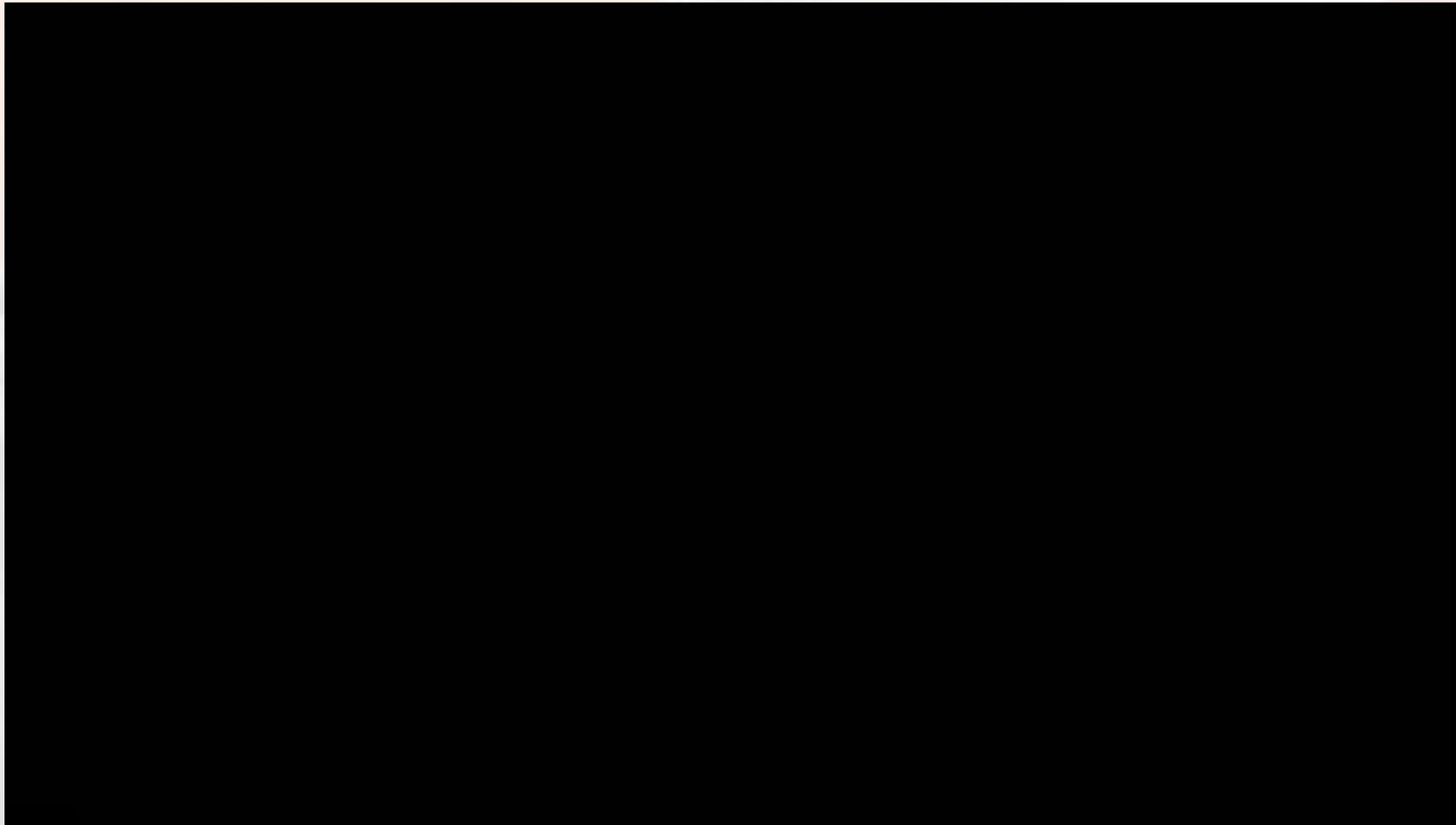
Listen to me someone. (*As though a vision were revealed to her.*) God in heaven, *Ronnie!* It does work, it's happening to me, I can feel it's happening, I'm beginning on my own two feet - I'm beginning...

*The murmur of the family sitting down to eat grows as BEATIE'S last cry is heard. Whatever she will do they will continue to live as before. As BEATIE stands alone, articulate at last -*  
*The curtain falls.*

[*Roots*, Act 3, pp. 150, 157]

"All kitchens, especially during service, go insane. There is the rush, there are plenty of quarrels, grumbles, false prides and snobbery. Kitchen staff instinctively hate dining-room staff, and all of them hate the customer. He is the personal enemy." (Wesker, 1961)

"The world might have been a stage for Shakespeare but to me it is a kitchen, where people come and go and cannot stay long enough to understand each other, and friendships, loves and enmities are forgotten as quickly as they are made." (Wesker, 1961)



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJvNwG6gJGw>

Bijan Sheibani's 2011  
production of Arnold  
Wesker's *The Kitchen*  
(Olivier theatre)





<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hiZQNRhSmwY>