

3rd September 2022

Singing

"The song was wordless; the singing will never be done."

Siegfried Sassoon, *Everyone Sang*

The murder of a little girl in Liverpool recently cast a pall of gloom over her city. Indeed, this tragic death has affected us all. The name of Olivia Pratt-Korbel will for ever be synonymous with the devastation violence brings. This little nine-year-old will be deeply mourned. A week or so after Olivia's death, this piece appeared on the website of *The Liverpool Echo*:

Liverpool and Everton supporters attending Saturday's Merseyside Derby at Goodison Park are being urged to take part in a minute's applause in memory of Olivia Pratt-Korbel. A joint statement from both groups read: "Our City has been shaken in recent weeks by gun and knife crime, including the death of nine-year-old Olivia Pratt-Korbel. It's time for our entire community ... to come together once again. If you know anything or have any information, please let the authorities know. Keeping quiet is not an option. As a mark of respect for Olivia, her family and those impacted by gun and knife crime in our city, we ask all supporters to take part in a minute's applause and to sing 'Merseyside' when the match clock reaches 9 minutes in Saturday's Merseyside Derby."

On a day when football rivalry would separate people into opposing camps, supporters were encouraged to come together for a common cause. They would join in heart-felt applause and not stand in silence, actively and corporately remembering the loss of a nine-year-old child. And ... they would sing. "Merseyside" would be sung by everyone.

There's a well-known football chant sung to rile opposition supporters: "You only sing when you're winning." But here were *all* supporters singing in sadness, with respect, in solidarity, to communicate their support for Oliva's family and all those who mourn.

I will sing too while that match is being played. My song will be wordless on Saturday, because I don't know "Merseyside" to enable me to join in with the Everton and Liverpool supporters. But, guided by Siegfried Sassoon, I *will* still sing. And when the ninth minute of the derby match is past and the applause has been replaced by more football chants, my singing will never be done, for the family of Oliva Pratt-Korbel, and all who mourn the tragic loss of a dear one.

A prayer for today

Lord, may the voice of my singing never be done in the face of tragedy and pain. Amen

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