

“The Gift”

Elon Brunus Grows From Survivor To Musical Thriver

By Anita Oubre

In the halls at Northshore High in Slidell a student shouts, “Hey! LAH HYPE.” The freshman who answers to that call is a 14-year-old gifted musician and songwriter. His name is Elon Paul Brunus. LAH

is an acronym for “Love and Hate” and the HYPE stands for the emotions that run rampant in a well-rounded young man who excels in everything he pursues.

But it wasn’t always this way for the young man who many of those around him call a “genius” and a “musical prodigy.” As his mother, Elaine Brunus explains, while she was carrying him during her pregnancy, tests were performed and her doctor informed her that she should prepare herself for the worst with the health of her unborn child. “The diagnosis seemed hopeless,” she recalled.

This grim news came while Elaine was going through a very turbulent and crucial time in her life. Her father was struggling with terminal cancer and she had just lost her 21-year-old nephew to violence. But she carried the baby to term and, soon after he was born, he was brought home on Christmas morning. The family refers to Elon as “The Gift.” For a young man who had such a grim diagnosis at the beginning of his life, Elon has proven to be “gifted” in many ways.

“Man says one thing and God says another,” is how Elaine sums up how her son’s life has evolved to where it is now.

And so today, while many boys his age spend the majority of their time playing video games, posting on Snap Chat and enjoying sports, Elon spends the majority of his time

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writing and playing music. He plays the trumpet, piano and drums and sings as well. He says “Not only is music a hobby that I enjoy, I use it as a way to release stress.”

Elon grew up in a musical family. His father, Kurt Brunus is a renowned jazz artist and producer who has enjoyed a successful career. He is the president of KS Productions and Swamp Island Records and music director/multi-instrumentalist for his band the Kurt Brunus Project. Over his career he has performed with a who’s who in music, including The Temptations, Aaron Neville, Bobby Womack and many others.

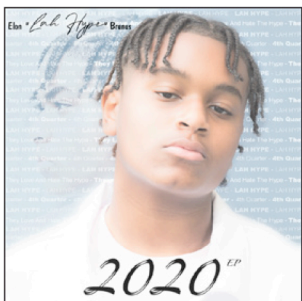
Following in his father’s footsteps Elon would sit at the piano and mimic what he was observing. He proudly noted that his father has been a wonderful influence and very encouraging to him. His paternal grandmother, Cynthia Bland, is also a vocalist. The entire family has musical roots.

Elon was born in Toronto Ontario, Canada and was raised in New Orleans. He attended Montessori school at a young age and then St. Mary’s Academy. He enjoys spending the holidays in Canada and adds that he is comfortable in New Orleans because there are so many creative people here. The New Orleans culture and arts scene has made quite an impression on a young Elon.

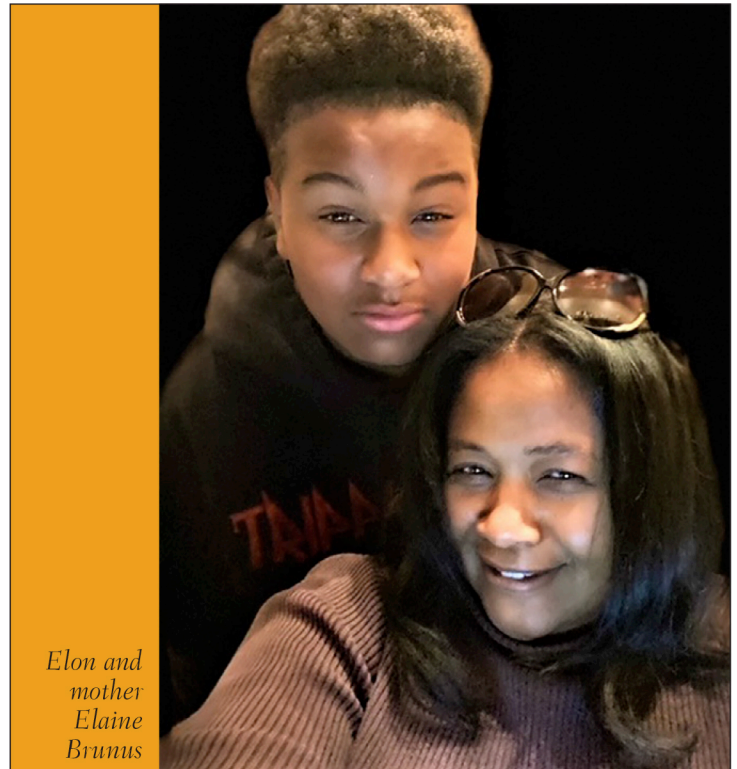
“Being raised in New Orleans, I see a lot of different things about how people live and behave,” said Elon. “There are so many creative people on the streets and I feel bad because their art should be in a museum. This helps me to push myself to be better with my own art.”

Elon’s favorite subject is English/ Language Arts. He is an avid reader who enjoys learning new words to add to his vocabulary. He says that this also helps him with songwriting. “I write a new song every day about my emotions and how I am feeling on that day,” said Elon. “The music is a way for me to deal with the world and my surroundings.”

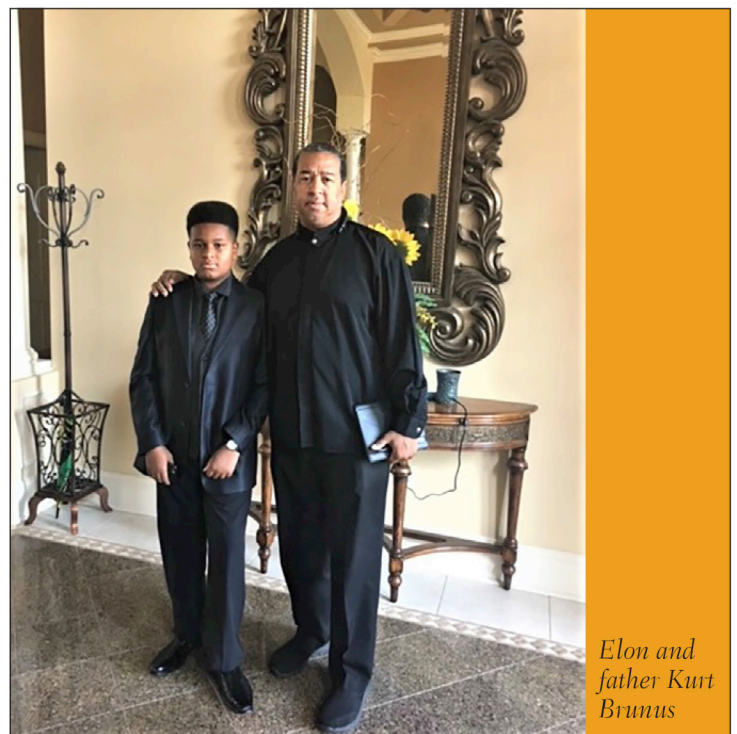
And there are many trials and tribulations that the world is experiencing firsthand in 2020, including COVID 19 and the protests against racism. Music has helped Elon deal with these issues and what he is experiencing as a young Black man. “Life is not the same. I never experienced anything like this and it’s hard,”



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Elon and mother Elaine Brunus



Elon and father Kurt Brunus

explained Elon. “I feel free when I play music. It takes away my burdens and stress.”

The worldwide pandemic has put a damper on gatherings and socializing, but Elon is grateful to be able to see friends when he can, as long as they all mask up and keep a good distance. He misses playing basketball and video games with his pals. Though



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not many of his friends play music, Elon enjoys bringing out the creativity in his friends by getting together and coming up with songs and raps that they can have fun with. Elon has taken advantage of this time during the pandemic by working on

a new song called “2020” that addresses the struggles of racism. His first single, titled “Bands,” has been released to great reviews. It is an upbeat tune with a Caribbean feel that encourages dancing.

Elon has accompanied his father on many gigs and he looks forward to one day traveling overseas with him. “I feel happy to have someone who feels like I do,” he said. “This helps me with my creativity.”

Although Elon has played music since he was a young child, he says that he started to get serious around the age of 12 and started studying at The Ellis Marsalis Center in the Musicians’ Village. He is very close with his older brother, Kurt Brunus Jr., who he turns to for advice and guidance. His grandmother Ella is someone he also relies on for support as well since she is a writer. Two other central figures who support and encourage Elon are his uncle, Paul Campbel, and Brennan Williams.

In his free time Elon enjoys listening to all genres of music including Rap, R&B, Reggae, Classical and Rock. He especially enjoys the music of Rap artist, “The Kid Laroi,” largely because of the work he has done as a young performer. To add to his many accomplishments, he has a 4.0 grade average, he is a former member of the Pelicans Jr. NBA dance team and he is the youngest member of the Men of Valor choir. His mother laughs as she says, “Elon has received more awards and accolades in his 14 years than most people receive in a lifetime.”

Elon works hard to perfect his craft and though he is very disciplined, there are days when it is hard on him. On those days, Elaine, as well as his father, step in to encourage him. Elaine believes that Elon has a destiny and stresses that she is “grateful to see everything that God has done for Elon. When he disappears for hours at a time I know he is in a place with God, creating and writing. The light in his eyes tells me everything I need to know when he shares a new song he has written. He is doing everything they said he was not supposed to do,” Elaine proudly

emphasizes.

Elaine says that she wants to encourage other families who may receive hopeless news through amniocentesis testing. “If a family really wants to bring a child into the world they should stand back and let God take control of the situation. Elon has a purpose. Most people do not see their purpose until late in life. God has done so much for him and every day I remind him to give God thanks. The lesson each day is simply ‘To whom much is given, much is required.’”

Both the family and Elon are excited about the future. Early next year his debut album, “Fourth Quarter,” will be released. In the meantime, Elon is content to keep on creating and moving forward. His music can be found on Spotify, YouTube music, and Apple music. 🎧

