

# CALGARY HERALD

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**SHOOTING  
VICTIM FINDS  
HEALING  
IN MUSIC**

Jose Neto was blinded after being caught in the cross-fire of a downtown shooting last month.

City & Observer, Page B4



Ted Jacob, Calgary Herald

Jose Neto, who was blinded last month by a bullet, shops Saturday for a guitar with girlfriend Roberta Porto at Long & McQuade. On Nov. 5, Calgary's Brazilian Community Association is hosting a fundraising concert at the Jack Singer Concert Hall in Neto's honour.

## Blinded Brazilian finds solace in music

JAMIE KOMARNICKI  
CALGARY HERALD

Jose Neto learned to play guitar without being able to hear the music.

As a teenager in Brazil, he sketched out strings onto the neck of a broken guitar cast aside by a neighbour and mapped with his fingers the chords he read off sheet music.

When Neto finally got his hands on a real instrument, the songs flowed smoothly.

Now, he's teaching himself to play for a second time — but this time without seeing.

Neto hunched over a Godin guitar at a Calgary music store Saturday, his dancing fingers picking out a reggae tune.

The song he crooned — roughly translated as Healthy Mind — is one he wrote with a friend when their band performed in Brazil's open-air clubs years ago.

"It's about the music. Music is my solution," Neto said of the tune's words.

The 24-year-old is wading through myriad issues thrust upon him by the careless gunfire of a criminal that stole his sight last month.

Music has become his solace.

"When I play, I don't think that I'm blind," said Neto on Saturday at Long & McQuade, where he picked out a new guitar donated by a generous Calgarian.

The instrument is one of many ways the community has rallied around the good-natured Brazilian, whose full name is Jose Ribamar Ribeiro Neto.

On Nov. 5, Calgary's Brazilian Community Association is hosting a concert fundraiser at the Jack Singer Concert Hall in Neto's honour.

The gala event will feature two of Brazil's most celebrated jazz musicians — Latin superstars Airo Moreira and Flora Purim, said the association's president, Elisia Teixeira.

They hope to raise enough funds to ensure Neto has the smoothest possible transition to his new life, she said.

Various medical bills, living expenses and equipment associated with his new blindness will tally to a large bill, she said.

"We are working on a plan for all his needs in terms of short-term, five-year and to-year," said Teixeira.

"We want all the options in place for when he wants to make a decision."

For now, Neto said the demands of the present are all-consuming.

A gunshot meant for someone else struck Neto while out for dinner with his girlfriend, Roberta Porto, and left him blind.

Since then, he's been adapting to his new life.

He's started mobility and typing training through the Canadian National Institute for the Blind and is re-learning everything from eating and drinking to walking and getting dressed without sight.

"Even where's the sink — I have to memorize it," he said.

"My memory is getting better and better."

But thoughts of the future still weigh on his mind.

The avid Bob Marley fan plays his

guitar and lets his mind wander, thinking about whether to stay in Calgary or go back to Brazil: about his previous plan to pursue international business studies and whether that will still work; about how his life changed since the night the bullet took away his vision.

"I think a lot right now. I play, just thinking," he said.

Tickets for the Nov. 5 fundraiser cost between \$25 and \$50. The evening also features a silent auction and music by Tequila Jazz.

For more information on the concert or for reservations, call 403-614-7003, e-mail [info@bcaab.org](mailto:info@bcaab.org) or visit: [www.brazilianassociation.org](http://www.brazilianassociation.org).

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