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**HIGH CONCEPT LABS WELCOME NEW ARTISTIC DIRECTOR**

CHICAGO, November 13, 2023 — High Concept Labs (HCL), a Chicago-based arts service organization and artist incubator, announced today that Aquil Charlton has joined HCL as its new Artistic Director. He joins HCL Managing Director Angee Lennard in a co-leadership position with the organization.

Aquil is a creative and visionary leader who leverages his experience as a teaching artist, consultant, and co-founder of artist collaboratives to make positive contributions in Chicago communities and the arts sector. His leadership in community-based cultural and youth development work have been recognized by Aspen Institute, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 3Arts, Northwestern University, and Yale University. Aquil is also an independent musician, rapper, songwriter, DJ, producer, and was an HCL Sponsored Artist in 2018. “As an alumnus of the residency, I feel so honored to return to HCL and contribute in this capacity,” says Aquil.

“Aquil and I came up as HCL Resident Artists at the same time. I am so happy to have him back at HCL as our Artistic Director,” stated Andy Slater, who serves on the HCL Board of Directors. “He has a unique opportunity to provide the same kind of support we received during our residencies to current and future HCL cohorts. His past experience at HCL and his vivid vision of the future will strengthen his role as a leader. We've got some great times ahead of us!”

“Aquil is, without a doubt, a great mind, and his unique sensibilities enable him to perceive intricacies that often escape the notice of most,” contributed Loinal “Brother El” Freeman, HCL Alumnus and founder of The Beat Bank, a long-time partner of HCL.

HCL Co-Director, Angee Lennard, adds, “Aquil brings a deep understanding of what artists need to thrive and a clear vision for how we can continue expanding HCL’s capacity to meet those needs. I’m inspired by his commitment to community-building and am eager to collaborate with Aquil to advance HCL’s mission and increase the impact of our work.”

“High Concept Labs is a soft and mindful landing place at the intersections of so many artists' careers, and my goal is to be a great steward of this vital service to the arts ecosystem in Chicago,” says Aquil. “I get to do this alongside an amazing team and I look forward to together welcoming a new group of residents for 2024 and supporting a thriving community of fellows, alumni, and partners. As a South Side Chicago resident, I am excited to strengthen our partnership with Experimental Station and facilitate connections with the rich networks of artists and spaces on the South and West Side.”

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**About High Concept Labs**

High Concept Labs (HCL) strengthens the creative sector by providing accessible flexible residencies for artists across disciplines interested in experimentation, discovery, exchange, and risk. HCL meets artists where they are with programming that raises visibility and provides critical investment across every stage in the development of new work. HCL’s core activity is its multifaceted residency program. Artists receive studio space, administrative and production assistance, equipment access, curatorial consultation, and documentation services.

HCL general operating support is provided by Ruth Arts Foundation, Walder Charitable Fund, Illinois Arts Council Agency, National Endowment for the Arts, Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation, The Norwottock Charitable Trust, Martha Struthers Farley and Donald C. Farley, Jr Family Foundation, Susan Manning and Doug Doetsch, and individual donors. HCL’s venue and programming partners include Monira Foundation, Experimental Station, Harris Theater for Music and Dance, Chicago Dancemakers Forum, and more.

For more information, visit [highconceptlabs.org](http://highconceptlabs.org).

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