

CENTRE FOR SENSORY STUDIES

TALKING SENSE LECTURE SERIES



Words and Songs in Motion: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Dengbêj Performances in Europe

Salih Akin and Agnes Grond

23 September 2026

10:00-11:30 AM Eastern

In-Person: EV 6.735, EV Building

Online: [Zoom Meeting Link](#)

This lecture introduces the art of dengbêj, traditional storytellers rooted in an oral tradition dating back to the eleventh century. Dengbêj songs preserve collective memory, language, and cultural identity. We will focus on how dengbêjs summon a multiplicity of perspectives in solo performance and create a presence of multiple voices in their song texts. This discursive polyphony foregrounds the complex entanglements of language, memory, and identity transmitted through dengbêji. Crucially, this art sustains the Kurdish language in contexts of marginalization and persecution, continually adapting to new sounds and new spaces and remaining alive through the embodied experience of performance. Building on these insights, the lecture will outline a future research project devoted to Kurdish dengbêj performances in the European diaspora. Recently approved by the 2026 French-Austrian ANR-FWF programme, this project will bring together linguistics, sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and ethnomusicology. A central focus will be the sensory dimensions of dengbêj performance – voice, soundscape, and embodied presence – developed in close collaboration with the Centre for Sensory Studies.

Dr. Salih Akin is Full Professor of Linguistics at the University of Rouen-Normandy, and Deputy Director of the Dylis Research Center. His research focuses on discourse analysis, onomastics, and sociolinguistics, with particular emphasis on the Kurdish language and its linguistic and sociolinguistics dimensions. He is also Director of *Studia Kurdica* and member of Canada Research Chair in Comparative Linguistic Minorities at the University of Montréal.

Dr. Agnes Grond is postdoctoral researcher at the University of Graz specializing in documentary linguistics, Kurdish linguistics, and the sociolinguistics of migration. She has led and co-led several research projects and currently works on the FWF-funded project *Archaic features in Bazayni-Kurdish*. Grond is Co-editor of the Vienna Kurdish Studies Yearbook and President of the Österreichische Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Kurdologie / Europäisches Zentrum für Kurdische Studien.