



“SPACE IS OPEN FOR EVERYONE; IT BELONGS TO EVERYONE.” MARAM KAIRE.



find out more

STAR CHASERS OF SENEGAL

Written and directed by **Ruth Berry**
Executive Producers: **Susanne Lummer, Sabine Holzer**
1 x 50 min., 4K, 5.1 and Stereo



This is a story of astronomy and astronomical missions. Of a NASA space mission called Lucy set to discover the origins of our solar system and an Earthly mission in Senegal, West Africa, to build a space agency.

The missions are linked by Senegalese astronomer Maram Kaire. Maram Kaire would like to bring astronomy and space science to Senegal. He believes science will change the fortunes of his emerging country. But first he must convince powerful Muslim leaders to embrace modern science.

An invitation to lead a team of international scientists on a data collecting mission for NASA provides a perfect opportunity to demonstrate the value of scientific collaboration.

Maram will take part in NASA's Lucy mission. The Lucy spacecraft is set to travel to Jupiter to photograph and analyse asteroids trapped in its orbit.

Planetary Scientist Marc Buie explains their significance: "These asteroids are the remnants of the building blocks of putting together the solar system. They bear witness to everything that has happened in the solar system since the first day."

Maram and his team will observe and record one of Lucy's target asteroids, Orus, as it passes in front of a distant star. The information gathered will provide the Lucy mission with crucial information for its flyby of Orus in 2028.

And Maram has a much bigger mission. For 15 years, he has strived to bring astronomy to Senegal. But, in an unexpected encounter in the holy city of Touba, he finds it may already be here! A family of traditional Muslims demonstrate how they use astronomy

developed centuries ago, to build sundials. They want to perfect time for daily prayers.

Maram is inspired to learn more about this medieval scholarship. In Istanbul, once the hub of Islamic science, he sees rare, centuries old astronomy texts. These are the type of books the family may have consulted.

But, Maram asks, what happened in Senegal before Islamic science was practiced? Answers may be found along the River Gambia, where more than

a thousand ancient stone circles have been built over three thousand years.

Maram wants to look at these site through the eyes of an astronomer. He may soon find his country has ancient connections to space he never dreamed existed.

People have always looked to the stars, that curiosity resulted in a NASA mission like Lucy, set to travel hundreds of millions of miles to visit asteroids that may hold the origins of our solar system.

If Maram and his team can help that mission succeed, he will have come one step closer to his goal – to build a space agency in Senegal.

A co-production of Terra Mater Studios and WGBH/NOVA

