

British Singer Sarah Brightman to Fly Aboard Soyuz Spacecraft in 2015

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British singer Sarah Brightman is scheduled to begin training this year for a 2015 flight to the International Space Station where she hopes to become the first professional musician to sing from space, the company arranging the trip said.

Brightman, a famed soprano who starred in Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Phantom of the Opera," will pay about \$52 million for a 10-day stay aboard the orbital outpost, Tom Shelley, president of privately owned Space Adventures, said.

"She's absolutely 100 percent committed," Shelley said during a National Space Club Florida Committee meeting. "She's putting together her mission plan now."

Brightman, who would become the eighth privately funded space tourist, is slated to fly in September 2015. Her training to fly on a Russian Soyuz capsule is scheduled to begin as early as this fall, Shelley said.

He said she planned to be the first professional musician to sing from space.

But she faces competition from Lady Gaga, who according to media reports late last year intends to be the first when she performs one song in space in early 2015 on a Virgin Galactic flight. Virgin Galactic, part of Richard Branson's Virgin Group, plans to offer suborbital space flights.

Brightman said in 2012 that she would travel to the space station, but her plans were not confirmed until now.

So far, Space Adventures has arranged for nine private missions to the space station, a \$100 billion research laboratory that flies about 418 kilometers above Earth. Microsoft co-founder Charles Simonyi made two trips.

Brightman will be the first private citizen to visit the station since Cirque du Soleil founder Guy Lalibarte paid about \$35 million for an 11-day stay in September 2009.

Google co-founder Sergei Brin has an option to fly on the next available Soyuz seat after Brightman, which most likely will be in 2017, Shelley said.

"He paid us a deposit and whenever we have a seat available, he has the right of first refusal," Shelley added.

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