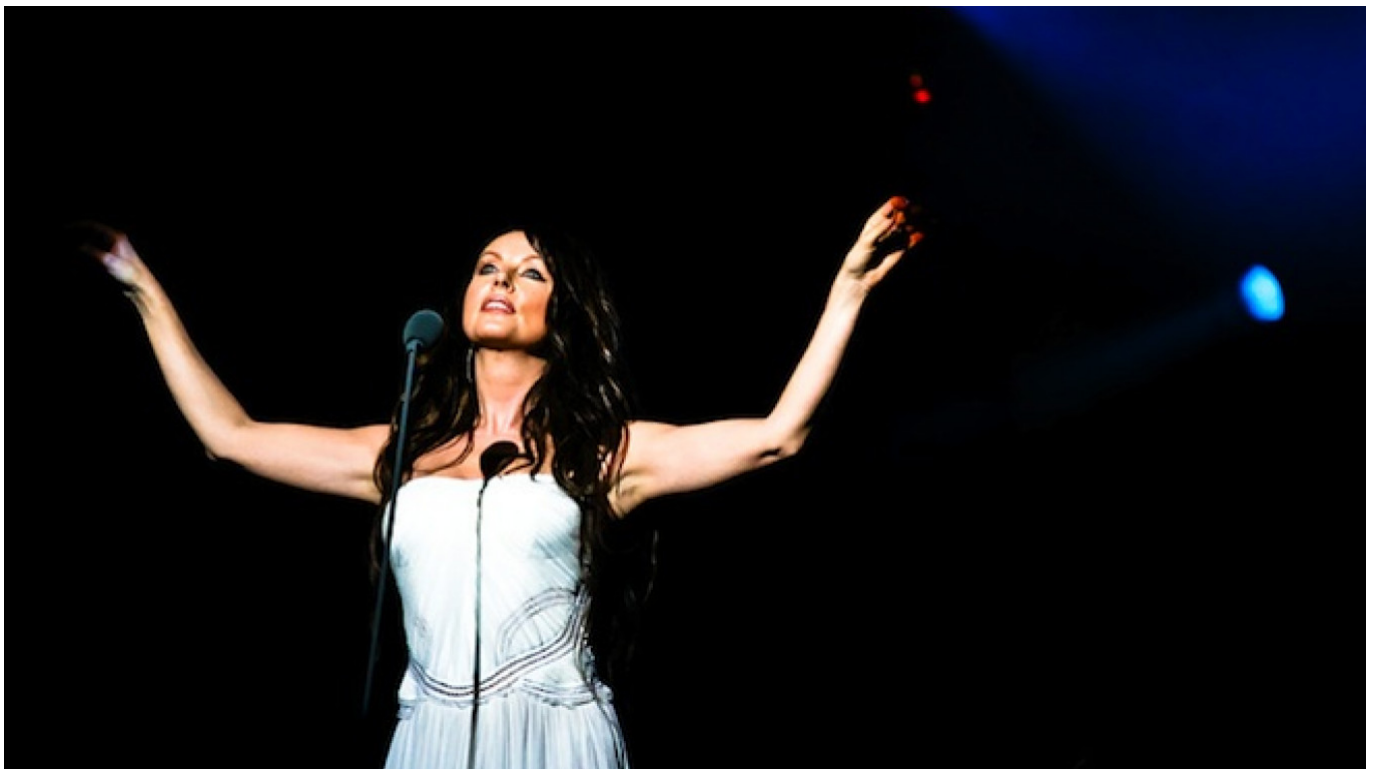


Singer Sarah Brightman Calls Off Flight to Space Station, Ends Russia Training

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Singer Sarah Brightman pictured in 2007.

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida — British soprano Sarah Brightman called off plans for a flight to the International Space Station, citing family reasons, the singer said in a statement Wednesday.

Brightman began training in Russia's Star City in January for a ride aboard a Russian Soyuz capsule and 10-day stay on the station, a \$100 billion research laboratory that flies about 260 miles (418 kilometers) above Earth.

The trip would have cost her about \$52 million, said Space Adventures, the privately owned U.S. travel agency that arranged the expedition.

"Ms. Brightman said that for personal family reasons her intentions have had to change and she is postponing her cosmonaut training and flight plans at this time," a statement on the singer's Facebook page said.

Brightman was to be the eighth paying tourist to visit the station, a project of 15 nations. One passenger, Microsoft Corp co-founder Charles Simonyi, has made the trip twice.

Japanese entrepreneur Satoshi Takamatsu had been training as Brightman's backup and presumably is in position to take over her seat. Space Adventures did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

Brightman was preparing for a September flight. That launch was likely to be delayed following the announcement on Tuesday that Russia is postponing the next station crew's launch two months until late July because of a Soyuz rocket accident investigation.

It was not known if Brightman's decision to cancel her training and flight is related to the launch delay.

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