

A 15-year veteran of transporting touring American orchestras, Pulleyn Transport began working with London's Philharmonia Orchestra two years ago, reports Will Dalrymple



BETTER BANDSTAND

Pulleyn's job is to transport the 120 or so instruments of the hundred-piece ensemble to and from rehearsal spaces, recording studios and the five concert venues where the group has a residency, as well as around the UK, seven days a week. And there are European tours as well; it is expected to travel 70,000 miles per year.

"We have taken the need for a transport manager away from them, and we look after drivers' hours, maintenance and servicing so it's a lesser problem for them to worry about," explains director Scott Pulleyn.

Last year, the orchestra agreed a five-year contract, and in November Pulleyn brought in a 26-tonne Mercedes-Benz Actros rigid 2551 powered by 343bhp Euro VI-compliant diesel and fitted with Gigaspace sleeper cab and Venta illuminated cyclist warning sign, supplied by Andover's Marshall Truck & Van. Its city-centre duty was a factor in the replacement decision, as new TFL emissions rules charge operators of Euro V vehicles, such as the previous vehicle, to enter London's low emission zone.

Wessex Vehicle Services fitted box bodywork to the 12m-long, 4m-high 6x2. Features include: an undermount Carrier Supra 1150 fridge; 2.4m, 2t capacity retractable Dhollandia tail-lift, which



is battery powered; LED lighting and nearside access door; six rails of Loadlok tiedown rail; and internal carpeting.

Each feature speaks to the particular needs of the unusual operation. First, the purpose of the fridge is not so much cooling as warming. The setting is locked at 20°C to minimise the thermal stress on the instruments packed up into hard-sided flight cases. Keeping the temperature constant minimises the expansion and contraction of the wood, skin and strings that make them up to help keep them in tune.

Cases are wheeled on and off using either two-piece loading ramps that pack up behind the rear doors, or with the tail-lift. The nearside door provides another access point in case another vehicle parks directly behind

the truck, or in case of an accident or other problem at the rear. (A second vehicle, now delivered, has the same specification except a bigger tail-lift; the DHL4000 4t capacity folding cantilever tail-lift, pictured, was specially modified to overtilt down to the ground.)

Although the exact packing list varies depending on the kind of music that is being played, the truck is always packed the same way, to protect the fragile instruments, while forming a solid mass to prevent individual boxes from vibration. Three rows of shelving at the front hold, from top to bottom, six cellos; three timpani (kettle drums) or three glockenspiels; and then three more. Across the entire load area are propped up four double bass instruments in flight cases kept as straight as possible, strapped in place against full-width horizontal shoring bars. Depending on the orchestra, there may be a second row, too, again strapped and barred, and then the rest of the cases are fitted in behind to form a self-supporting array. Pulleyn compares the job of loading the vehicle to a game of Tetris, albeit with different rules. Internal carpeting provides extra insulation and protection.

The company operates 35 trucks from Reading, where it also employs three Mercedes-trained technicians in a two-bay, two-pit workshop. **TE**