

## **Otello as a graphic novel, Fondazione Teatro Comunale di Modena**

Giuseppe Verdi's *Otello* is about to become a graphic novel. "We are not talking about a simplified version of the opera" explains Aldo Sisillo, the director of the *Fondazione Teatro Comunale*, the foundation which is responsible for producing the volume, "neither is it an explanation for young people, rather, it is a way of observing opera through one of the languages of contemporary society. Above all, Modena has a long tradition of excellence regarding the world of comics and we thought it would be a wonderful idea to use this occasion to create synergy between two worlds which on the surface seem so distant". Stefano Ascari is the author of the text and the man with the difficult job of synthesising this story of love, envy and jealousy between Othello, Iago and Desdemona. He was also responsible for three similar graphic novels published between 2011 and 2012: *Macbeth*, *Romeo e Giulietta*, and *la Traviata*. Ascari comes from the new generation of Modenese comic book writers. He trained in the studio of Massimo Bonfatti, the author of *Cattivik*, and recently was also responsible for the text of *Mytico!*, produced by RCS-Corriere della Sera.

The artwork is by the Florentine artist Alberto Pagliaro, who is extremely well known in France, where he does most of his work. "In the characterisation of this version of *Otello*, Pagliaro has interpreted different strands of influence" explains Ascari. "He uses a science-fiction/ technological imagery which undoubtedly can be traced to Japan. The choice of characterisation in the expressivity of the faces is borrowed from *manga*, because Japanese comics pay such great attention to the portrayal of expression -especially where it comes to strongest expressions of the type found in a tragedy like that of *Otello*-, while Italian graphic novels traditionally tend to render more through dialogue, and employ a more moderate tone with the action".

In the production of this graphic novel and the whole *Lirica a strisce* collection (which can be translated as "*Comic strip Opera*"), the *Fondazione Teatro Comunale* has worked with the Modenese company *Labirinto Comunicazione*.