

# ODDS ON

## Director's Note



Thank you so much for watching Odds On. We're Daphna and Terry from Dante or Die, and we co-wrote and directed the experience. We wanted to give you a bit of context about how site-specific theatre makers ended up making an interactive short film.

So, rewind to Christmas 2019. Terry's in a bookies in the South West of Ireland: "I haven't been in a betting shop for years but as I'm looking around, I start to imagine a show happening around me. They're such interesting spaces with so many moments of drama taking place in them. And they're popping up left, right and centre on our high streets, at a time when the rest of the high street is dying. I immediately wanted to make a new production in a betting shop." So, we got to work and received seed funding from Farnham Maltings to do some research & development. Then Covid shut everything down, and suddenly an intimate production in a betting shop seemed quite impossible in the near future.

We'd recently adapted our live production User Not Found into a video podcast and had made a short documentary film - we've found it really rewarding and creatively challenging to make new productions in different art forms, and it allows us to reach audiences that can't get to our live work around the country and internationally. So when we started reading articles about rising levels of online gambling, we started to consider creating some sort of digital production, using the online world of a slot machine game as the 'site'.

We put together a plan that we could make work during Covid, to test out how this might be put together. Alongside that we spoke with game developers, people who had worked for betting companies and a range of people who work in the gambling recovery sector. We heard a lot of stories about the online slot machine space being targeted at women over 50 - and that seemed like a story we hadn't heard before. A lot of women spoke about things like how gambling became a safe, private experience, a guilty pleasure, or took responsibility away. The fact that the most lucrative day of the year for online gambling is Valentine's Day really stuck in our minds.

It was clear that we needed to learn from those with lived experience and so we developed a creative workshop programme to offer to people with lived experience of gambling harm, headed up by our Participation Producer Lucy Dear and Associate Artist Fiona Watson who also plays Felicity in Odds On. We ran a series of online workshops last summer as well as in person at recovery residentials at Gordon Moody, a charity that provides support and treatment for people experiencing gambling harm. Over 60 people shared their personal stories and devised their own theatre & film scenarios and characters. Everyone who took part in a workshop was invited to be part of our Lived Experience Creative Advisory Group. Five very talented and generous people came on the journey with us - and met us online every month since October last year. A huge thank you to Nicola, Jade, Nadine, Owen & Ryan for collaborating on this with us. Their insights, honesty and expertise has been at the heart of this project.

We wanted to explore the notion of fake chance as part of our storytelling, which is why we chose to create the interactive element of the film. The dramaturgy of slot machine games was central to the audience journey - we think we can affect the story, but we're just triggering a pre-determined code. In our live performances, a mundane space like a café or hotel room becomes magical in a moment. A lot of the women we spoke to, talked about how online gambling was an escape into a fantasy world without responsibility, so we experimented with Felicity's reality being taken over by the bright and gawdy 2D animation world of a slot machine.

Gambling is a hidden addiction, and is pervading our homes, workplaces and streets. We hope that Odds On helps to humanise this prescient issue and gets you talking about how it lives amongst us. If you or any of your friends or family have been affected by any of the issues in the film do have a look at the [Support Pack](#) that the Creative Advisory Group have led on compiling. A huge thank you to our dedicated, talented and tenacious creative and producing team for going on this journey with us.