

## Shantell Ogden faces the blank page

By Nicole Sheahan

Shantell Ogden loves the challenge of facing a blank page. For the last 12 years, Ogden has taken on blank page after blank page, challenging herself to write and breathe life into new songs.

But creating something that didn't exist before is only part of the reason she loves to write. Ogden understands the potential a great song has to change people's lives.

"It's more about what a song can do," Ogden said. "Sometimes it just makes people laugh. There are certain songs where I'll look out into the audience and I'll see tears rolling down cheeks. That's the moment as a writer that you know what you put into the song is honest and real and it matters."



Ogden with a songwriter's best friend

Ogden has written many songs that are full of genuine emotion. One song in particular, "[What Matters the Most](#)," has touched many listeners (and is the first song she's had under contract with a publishing company). Ogden co-wrote this song with her friend [Bill DiLuigi](#) about her dear friend and neighbor, Onetia Lovell.

Ogden said, "Over time we developed this really special friendship. Onetia was in her 80s, but the 50-year age difference didn't phase either one of us. We were kindred souls who ended up here at different times. I learned a lot from her about carrying yourself with grace at the end of your life.

"I met Onetia right before she started to have some health problems. She had had some falls and was in and out of rehabilitation centers and hospitals. She made the decision to sell everything she owned and move into a care facility close to where her daughter lived. Her friends said that she never stopped being open to the people around her. She never stopped serving people; she never stopped making friends; she never stopped living. Even in the moments where it wasn't pretty, she still had this incredible grace and just a beautiful, beautiful spirit.

"I was telling my friend Bill DiLuigi about her...We were just talking about that idea of how at the end of the day, it's the relationships you have, it's the love you share, it's the impact you have on lives and all of the physical things really aren't important. We really felt that this song was a gift."

For Ogden, songwriting isn't about commercial success. Yes, she hopes for it, but she has realized that being a songwriter helps her to become more of the person she wants to be.

"It helps you develop as a person in certain ways and those are valuable things to me in life, those life lessons. It's more about becoming and the journey than it is about attaining," Ogden said.

As she seeks to grow as a songwriter and as a person, Ogden tries to spend time writing every day. She has developed great discipline by writing often.

Songwriting has also opened Ogden's eyes even more to the stories all around her.

She said, "I think one of the most important things is to stay open to song ideas because they're everywhere. They're on greeting cards, they're in what people say at the line at the super market, they're in a thought you might have when you first wake up in the morning. Just being open to those ideas is really important."

The blank page has opened up opportunities for Ogden to see life in new ways, to create something meaningful that didn't exist before, and to touch lives with powerful messages.

For more information and to listen to Ogden's music, visit [www.shantellsmusic.net](http://www.shantellsmusic.net).