

Special delivery

Trio of Cedar Valley artists to send peace song to president

By MARY STEGMEIR

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WATERLOO — Cedar Valley vocalists Effie Burt and Rick Wangsness first recorded the world peace ballad “We Are in This Together” in 1995.

The tune’s songwriter, Janine Ambrose, sent a copy of the anthem to then-President Bill Clinton in the hopes that her words could inspire change.

She never heard back from the commander-in-chief, but more than a decade later the Waterloo woman, along with Burt and Wangsness, have repackaged their product. A music video of “We Are in This Together” will be sent to the White House — this time in care of President Barack Obama.

“It’s about unity,” said Ambrose, who also hopes to score air time for the song on local radio stations. “And Obama is about unity.”

The video, featuring shots of Burt and Wangsness, was produced last week at Grand Junction Recording Studio and includes images of Iowans helping one another during the 2008 floods. The artists hope the new product will resonate with the

president.

“Obama has said many times that we need to stand together,” said Burt, a Waterloo woman who penned “I’ll Make Me a World in Iowa,” one of the state’s two official tunes. “(Ambrose’s) song is from a few years ago, but its lyrics still haven’t been achieved. If anything, it seems like we’ve went farther away from where we were.”

The vocalists were in part selected for the diversity they brought to the project, said Ambrose. Burt, an African-American, is a jazz and R&B singer. Wangsness, a white man, specializes in country-western songs.

The Allison man said he enjoyed revisiting Ambrose’s piece, which proclaims, “Unity must be our plan, unity must be our stand.”

“People need to start not just looking out for themselves, but looking out for other people and working together,” said Wangsness, a former Sundance band member. “I haven’t heard a lot of Janine’s other stuff, but I do know that she’s got a lot of talent when it comes to putting a message out with a song.”



RICK CHASE / Courier Staff Photographer

Vocalists Effie Burt, right, and Rick Wangsness record a take for a music video of the song “We Are in This Together” by Janine Ambrose. The project was filmed at Grand Junction Recording Studio and will be sent to President Barack Obama.