

Law teaches you structure and how to argue a case. Music teaches you to feel and how to move a crowd. Both, at their best, are about connection.

Wangutusi: Lawyer by day, DJ by night

Each new case is like a new song, you learn its structure, its nuances, how to present it. One uses statutes and precedents; the other uses beats and basslines. But the goal is similar; to create something resonant, to make an impact, to find the rhythm in the structure.

BY ROLAND D. NASASIRA

In the corridors of Uganda's legal system, Daniel Wangutusi moves with the deliberate focus of a lawyer building his practice. Hours later, under the pulsing lights of a Kampala lounge, the same man becomes "Wangutusi Selector," his hands gliding over DJ decks, commanding the energy of a room lost in reggae's steady groove. This is not a case of split personality, but a masterfully conducted symphony of passion and profession, a life built on the twin pillars of a family legacy; justice and music.

To witness Wangutusi in either realm is to see a man completely in his element. The transition, however, is what fascinates. "People often see the two worlds as contradictory," he says. "One is seen as rigid, bound by precedent and procedure. The other is felt as fluid, driven by emotion and spontaneity. But for me, they are complementary forces. Law teaches you structure and how to argue a case. Music teaches you to feel and how to move a crowd. Both, at their best, are about connection."

The father's legacy

The roots of this dual existence run deep, nourished by his father, retired High Court Justice David Wangutusi. The elder Wangutusi is remembered not only for his legal acumen but for his profound, unabashed love for music, a trait that painted Daniel's childhood in vibrant sonic hues.

"Our home was never silent," Wangutusi recalls with a smile. "My father had a powerful, well-amplified sound system installed. Music flowed from the car, the balcony, every room. It was his language of joy. He would pull us from our studies to dance, no was not an option. In those moments, he was not a judge; he was a man completely alive in the music."

This immersive upbringing did more than create a hobby; it forged a worldview. Wangutusi observed that his father's excellence in court was paralleled by his passion at home. There was no conflict, only a full life. "He showed me that professionalism does not require the suppression of your spirit. He is everything I want to be; respected in his career, and utterly human in his passions."

The path, however, was not pre-planned. Wangutusi's own musical journey began as a private exploration at 15, a teenage curiosity that grew into self-taught skill. By the time he entered Kampala International University in 2013 to study law, he was the friend with the "good playlists," soon graduating to spinning at small parties and birthdays. "It was organic. I never saw it as a career path. It was just something I loved that my friends appreciated."

The juggling act

The real test came during the demanding years at the Law Development Centre (LDC), where many aspiring lawyers submerge themselves entirely in books. Wangutusi chose a different strategy, one of intentional balance. "I made a conscious decision to not let law school consume my identity," he explains. "I went to class, I studied hard, but I also went out. I played music when friends asked. If you do not, you emerge with a certificate but having missed the life that shapes you."

Today, his weekly schedule is a meticulously planned testament to this philosophy, a dynamic calendar where legal appointments and DJ bookings coexist. His current role is Director at Waling Consults, where he specialises in the evolving fields of data protection, privacy, and energy law. This directorship grants him the autonomy to "work at his pace and time," a crucial flexibility that enables his unique lifestyle.

The most delicate part of Wangutusi's balancing act is not time management, but identity management. How does one ensure the gravitas of a lawyer is not undermined by the perceived informality of a DJ?

"For me, the line is drawn by context, dress, and conduct, what I call 'professional etiquette,'" he states. In court and the office, he is "Counsel Wangutusi," his language precise, his demeanour formal.

In the DJ box, he sheds the symbolic robes, but not his core professionalism. "There is a way I carry myself, the language I use, even how I engage with the crowd. I am aware that I represent not just myself, but the legal profession. I cannot act in a way that would bring my primary career into disrepute."

This conscious separation extends to his wardrobe. Except for his early Wednesday gig, where he goes straight from work, he always returns home to change. The suit is a uniform of one profession; his smart-casual DJ wear is the uniform of another. "The physical act of changing clothes is a psychological signal. It helps me switch modes completely."

Fatigue and preconceptions

The lifestyle is rewarding but not without its strains. The primary challenge is physical and mental fatigue. A late Monday night at Safari Maze is often followed by an early Tuesday morning in court. "You learn to function on less sleep, to be sharp when you need to be. Coffee helps," he jokes, before turning serious. "But it is sustainable only because the DJing is energising, not draining. It is my release. If it felt as a second job, I could not do it."

The second, more subtle challenge is societal perception.

"There is an unspoken expectation that lawyers should occupy a certain social stratum; certain clubs, certain hobbies. Being a DJ in bars can challenge that stereotype."

He has encountered surprise, sometimes skepticism, from both legal peers and nightlife patrons. "I have had people I meet as a DJ do a genuine double-take when they are later introduced to 'Counsel Wangutusi' in a legal setting. The cognitive dissonance can be amusing."

Yet, this very friction has become a professional advantage. His nightlife network has organically bled into his legal practice. "Some of my best clients, artistes, event managers, bar owners, come from the music scene. They see me in both worlds and trust me because I understand their industry from the inside. My passion has become a bridge to my clients."

A life in harmony

A crowning moment of validation came in 2025, when he was selected as the DJ for the annual Justices Dinner. There, surrounded by the Attorney General, judges, and senior legal minds; the very embodiment of his day-world, he provided the night's soundtrack. "It was a full-circle moment," he says. "To have my passion welcomed into the heart of my profession was incredibly affirming. It signalled that the two identities could not only coexist but be celebrated together."

For Wangutusi, the question is never "lawyer or DJ?" It is "lawyer and DJ." His life argues against the monolithic professional identity. A typical day; waking at 6.30am, working a full legal schedule, perhaps arguing in court, then unwinding by curating a musical journey for a crowd, is not a schism, but a harmony.

"I cannot claim to have perfected either art," he concludes thoughtfully. "Law, as music, is a continuous learning process. Each new case is like a new song, you learn its structure, its nuances, how to present it. One uses statutes and precedents; the other uses beats and basslines. But the goal is similar; to create something resonant, to make an impact, to find the rhythm in the structure."

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Daniel Wangutusi aka Wangutusi Selector.

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