

SUMMER SONG

The Story

The time is the summer of 1893; the location, Willow Falls, a small lumber town in the Middle West, and this is the setting for an imaginary incident in the life of Anton Dvorak, the great Czech composer. He arrives there in a state of depression seeking inspiration to write a symphony in tribute to America. By accident his valise has been exchanged for one labelled 'Tomashek', and he does not disclose his identity when the inhabitants mistakenly accept him as Tomashek.

The majority of the lumbermen are Czech immigrants, but the land, the trees, the sawmill and the saloon are owned by a domineering widow, 'Ma' Flannagan. With one exception she has bought up every parcel of land so that a railroad can be built by which she hopes her son Shaun will become a millionaire. The one plot of land not owned by her is owned by Marek, whose attractive daughter Mill is barmaid in Flannagan's saloon. She is courted by Joe, a pedlar whom she sees only once a year. Marek has been writing letters in glowing terms of life in this brave new world to his brother in Bohemia and has told tall stories about his big 'store'. Marek's niece, Karolka, arrives unheralded as an immigrant. She and Dvorak at once become great friends and both get jobs in the saloon; he as pianist and she as a barmaid.

Unaware at their first meeting that Shaun is a Flannagan, she rebukes him for trying to be 'fresh' with her. She also tells him some home truths about his unscrupulous mother. Despite this unpromising start, they fall in love.

Dvorak finds inspiration in a wealth of new sound and folk music to speed his composition. He learns folk lore from Abe, a negro handyman, who also tells him how he overheard Ma Flannagan planning to trick Marek into parting with his land. By bluffing his hand in a game of poker Dvorak turns the tables on Ma and eventually gets from her a good price for Marek's land. But when Ma Flannagan becomes aware of the romance between Shaun and Karolka, she sends her packing under threat of expelling all her friends and relations from Willow Falls.

When the time comes for Ma to take over Marek's land he drops a bombshell by telling them that Milli and Karolka are joint owners with him and that it will be necessary to find them before a sale can be made.

Meanwhile, Dvorak has completed his symphony and returns to New York to conduct its first performance. It is he who finds Karolka and takes her to the conductor's room at Carnegie Hall. There the land deal is settled and the lovers are united. An attendant announces, "The orchestra is waiting, Dr. Dvorak", and those he has befriended gaze in awe at the great man as he takes the baton and goes out to achieve his greatest triumph.

