During the mid-1800’s when Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky was growing up in Russia, children did not have the opportunity to learn about music in school and the possibility of a career in music was virtually non-existent. Though Peter was musically talented, he was a young man before he had the chance to study music at Saint Petersburg Conservatory. The melodic and harmonic fundamentals of Russian music that were a part of his native country were different than the way composers treat melodies and harmonies in the other parts of the world. As a composer, Tchaikovsky struggled to bring these opposing governing practices together. What he had learned about music set him apart from other Russian composers. He eventually developed his own personal Russian style and was the first Russian composer whose music became known internationally.

Peter’s mother was his father’s second wife. Because Peter’s father was in the military, both his mother and father had studied music and the arts. The training was deemed necessary by the military for the purpose of entertainment since military personal were often stationed in remote locations and there was little else to do.

Tchaikovsky’s parents were supportive of his musical ability when he was young. The family fired a governess when Peter was four years old and because of Peter’s insistence, he was allowed to study with his six year old brother, Nikolai. At five he was learning to play the piano. (Fanny Dürbach, the governess, saved many of his early compositions.) At six he could speak both French and German and by the time he was eight, he could read sheet music as well as his teacher. He was ten when he was sent to boarding school.

Although Tchaikovsky experienced success as a composer, he struggled with depression and his personal life was filled with conflict and trauma. His mother died while Peter was attending boarding school and many believe this is when his troubles began. He died suddenly at the age of fifty-three.
Symphony No 4 in F Minor, Opus 36

Scherzo (fourth movement)

Composer Peter Ilyich Tchkovsky

During music at school, you may have learned what an ostinato is (a rhythm or melody pattern that is played repeatedly), but do you know what pizzicato means or what a scherzo is? Pizzicato is when the strings of an instrument in the string family are plucked instead of being played with a bow. A scherzo is a fast, light piece of music that is usually part of a larger piece of music.

The movement of Symphony No. 4 by in F Minor Peter Ilyich Tchkovsky is a scherzo and during this movement the string section plucks their strings. At the beginning of this movement the string section introduces a light, little melody pattern which softly rises and falls. As this melodic ostinato continues, the string players accent certain pitches building interest and intensity while the other sections of the orchestra rest. Then the oboe in the woodwind section plays a high, long sound to indicate a change is coming and after four loud plucks, the strings cease playing and the woodwind section begins to play. The melody pattern is transferred to the piccolo and flutes and eventually the brass begin to play. The merriment continues in a sort of cat and mouse game. Not to be left out, the strings return as the ostinato is passed back and forth. The movement softly closes with the pizzicato of the string section.

https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Symphony+No+4+op+36+by+Tchaikovsky+scherzo&&view=detail&mid=22539C8B5032A33D3FF822539C8B5032A33D3FF8&FORM=VRDGAR