



Insiders guide to fitness: Hillard Studio Method

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◁Written by Cathy Bortz

I was having dinner with a group of my girl friends the other night when they began a discussion on what measures they were taking to keep lean and fit as they aged. They were all talking about "HSM" and how it had changed their lives.....I said I did not know about HSM, and asked if it was some kind of miracle hormone they were taking, and where could I get some!

After their laughter subsided, they informed me that HSM was the [Hillard Studio Method](#), an exercise studio located in Myers Park. It is a pilates-based exercise regime that integrates mat pilates, with barre and resistance training.

I decided to try a Beyond Barre class last Thursday at 9:30. Liz Hillard, the owner and founder, was the teacher. I walked in to find a sea of long legs and Lu Lu Lemon. A mass exodus of regulars left the 8:30 class, while the 9:30 group fled to find a spot for the next class. My 9:30 class was packed with what seem to be die hard Liz Hillard fans, and why wouldn't they be.....with the body of a 20-year old, this grandmother of 2 is the ultimate specimen of fitness. Her daughter, Clary, who has joined in on the family business, also has a toned and sculpted physique you will marvel at.

Liz persuaded me to grab 8lb and 3lb weights, and I realized pretty quickly into the first few exercises that the 8lb weights were too much. During the first 20 minutes of class we worked with the weights held at shoulder level. We worked in a wide leg turn out stance concentrating on the biceps and shoulders. We worked the triceps while working the legs in a lunge position. We then moved onto planks and push-ups, all the while my shoulders begging for relief. The relief did come when we moved to the ballet barre, but it did not last long.

We worked plies in some amazingly effective positions focusing on the thighs and glutes. Liz then added the resistance ball to the barre work as we continued to work the thighs, hamstrings and glutes. We then moved onto inner thighs and finished off with abdominal work.

Liz, performed the exercises but also walked around to check form. There were several other teachers walking around checking form as well. This class moved very, very fast without much transition time between exercises - by the time I got the hang of one exercise we had moved onto the next. Body alignment and positioning are crucial in this class to get the benefit.

I wish I had signed up for the basics class first, so that I could have had a better idea about the different positions and their muscular focus. This was a very intense class full of energy and beautifully lean women. I would not call this class a cardio workout, although you will get your heart rate up. You will be sore in places you did not know even existed. There was one man in our class, and he seemed to have a better handle on the movements than me.

This class is very different than regular barre classes in that Liz has taken her intensive pilates base training and incorporated weight and resistance moves to create a very specific and personalized class. You will never get bored here, as every class is different and will continually challenge you. All the equipment is provided. You workout in bare feet so you do not need special shoes or no-slip socks.

The studio itself is located on Fenton Place with extra parking behind the manor theatre. The large one room studio has mirrors along all the walls, as well as ballet barres. The front desk has a wealth of clothing and nutritional items for sale. The Hillard Studio is not only teaching you how to be fit, but is also promoting a healthy lifestyle as well. HSM has a very impressive website where you can purchase workout DVD's and organic supplements, not to mention a healthy and delicious smoothie recipe and ingredients. The instructors all go through a 150-hour rigorous training session before they are allowed to teach and are certified in CPR.

Details

Hillard Studio Method

Address: 516 Fenton Place

Telephone: 704-236-3377

Website: hillardstudiomethod.com

Reservations: Yes, on-line reservations

Cost: \$150.00 10 class package for new clients (other individual and monthly packages available)

Childcare: No

Safety: CPR certified

Parking: Good (extra spaces located behind the manor theatre)

Intensity: High, but they offer a lower intensity option



Cathy Bortz, a mother of 4 teenagers, is a native Charlottean. A fitness instructor for the last 25 years she has taught at the Dowd YMCA, Exercise Plus, Workout of Charlotte, and is currently teaching at The Cornwell Center.

Read Cathy's [Introduction](#) and other reviews:

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[Flywheel](#)

• [Pure Barre](#)

[9Round](#)

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